



A Beginner's Guide to Canning

How to pick a recipe, prep your jars and safely process your product

First, **pick out your recipe**. You want to pick from a reliable source like the Ball website, the National Center for Home Food Preservation or a cookbook with tested recipes (or my book or website!). Once you know what you're making, **gather your ingredients**. Always work with the freshest produce you can find, as it will result in the very best product.

Grab a **large stockpot** that is tall enough to hold the jars and drop a rack, trivet or tea towel in the bottom. Arrange the jars in the pot and **fill it with enough water to cover the jars**. Place a lid on the pot and bring it to a boil.

Side the rings aside and pop the lids into a small saucepan. Cover them with water and place on a burner set to very low heat.

While canning pot heats, prepare your product according to the recipe. When your product is ready, **remove the jars from the canning pot** (pouring the water back into the pot as you remove the jars) and set them out on a clean towel on your counter.

Fill your jars with your product. Depending on the recipe, you'll need to leave between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch of headspace. **Wipe the rims** of the jar with a clean, damp paper towel or the edge of a kitchen towel. **Apply lids and rings**, taking care not to tighten the rings too tightly.

Lower the filled jars into the canning pot and make sure that they are covered with about an inch of water. If you need to remove some water from the pot, use a heatproof measuring cup. Once the pot has returned to a boil, **start your timer**. The length of the processing time will vary from recipe to recipe.

When your timer goes off, **remove the jars from the water bath**. Place them back on the towel-lined countertop and let them cool. The lids should begin to seal soon after they've been removed from the pot. **You may hear a pinging or popping sound** as the lids seal or go concave.

Once the jars have cooled to room temperature, **check the seals** by removing the rings, grasping the jar by the edge of the lid and gently lifting it an inch or two off the countertop. If the lid holds fast, the seal is good.

If your seals are good, you can **store your jars in a cool, dark place** (with the rings off, please) for up to a year. Jars that don't seal can be refrigerated and used within a few weeks.

For more canning inspiration & instruction, visit foodinjars.com